

## INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY USSR (Latvian SSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT The Situation in Latvia in 1956

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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1.  report on the situation in Latvia during 1956  Section headings in the report are as follows: Youth, Reaction to Events in Hungary and in Poland, The False "Thaw" in 1956, Education, Conscription, Economic Situation, Collectivization, Virgin Lands Campaign, Freedom of Travel, Foreign Broadcasts, Return of Post-War Deportees, and Religious Worship.
2. The report contains two brief items of military information which are reported below in full:
  - a. The Latvian conscripts have, since 1956, been obliged to perform their military service, not in Latvia, but in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the Far East, or the extreme north. Officially they serve three years but frequently do not return home until two to seven months after completing their service.
  - b. Latvians may travel freely through the Soviet Union except to closed military zones for which special permission is needed. In Latvia there are two such zones: Lepaya, a naval base, and Dundaga (N 57-35, E 22-20), which, according to rumors, is a guided missile base.

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**SECRET**U.S.S.R./LATVIAPOLITICALSituation in Latvia  
end of 1955 - end of 1956**A. Youth**

1. Communist ideological education has entirely failed. The youth as a whole is anti-Communist but it has no real programme or ideology for the future. Young people are nationalist-minded yet they agree that public enterprises such as the railways, banks, electricity, telephone services etc should remain in the hands of the State while industry, trade and agriculture should be private. But their thinking is confused; there are no secret discussion clubs, underground newspapers, underground organisations or partisans etc; all this sort of activity ceased in 1949.

**B. Hungary and Poland**

2. The Latvians believe that it is only once the Satellite countries are liberated that the turn of the annexed countries such as the Baltic States will come. The latter have suffered so much, are so exhausted and depressed that they do not for a moment believe that under the present Soviet control any protest meetings or demonstrations are worth it. Popular reactions to the events in Hungary and Poland limited themselves to private discussions at home. In public there was general apathy to the Party "line" on Hungary. Latvia has been so exhausted by the deportations of 1949 that people do not have the strength to do anything. When the Communists later asked the workers to work 8 hours on Saturdays again instead of 6 "for the benefit of the Hungarians" people accepted this with a shrug of the shoulders. Despite the fact that the Kadar regime would benefit therefrom they reasoned to themselves that they were still helping the Hungarian people.

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C. The false "thaw" in 1956

3. At the beginning of 1956 there was something of a "thaw", but not on the same scale as in Poland. Rumours circulated that there would be free elections and at some meetings there was even some discussion of Latvia becoming a sovereign state, only dependent on MOSCOW in the way the Satellites are. The police terror was also less felt. But in July 1956, just after POZNAN, the situation deteriorated once more. The police increased its supervision, police and security squads patrolled the streets checking and arresting pedestrians at night, obligatory political lectures were re-introduced and Party discipline reimposed. So the effects of "de-Stalinisation" were short felt in Latvia.

4. In the first half of 1956 there was a certain oppositional trend in the universities but it took very mild forms. As half the students of RIGA University are Russians the Latvians had little chance of achieving anything. No meetings took place, but in the papers, even in "Komsomolskaya Pravda", some students complained in very modest and careful terms about the difficult studies, the fact that scholarships were too small etc. In TARTU the opposition took on much stronger forms. Here the number of Russians is much smaller and the Estonians are extremely patriotic and nationalistic. The proportion of Russians in the population is also smaller and they keep more to themselves. There is in fact no private social intercourse between Latvian and Russian youth and contacts are limited to the minimum necessary.

D. Education

5. Russian studies are obligatory for Latvian students but not vice versa. There are both Latvian and Russian groups at the University. Latvians study in Latvian and the Russians in Russian. However, after the third year, the Latvian students must pass oral and written examinations in the Russian languages and if they do not receive a good mark, they are not permitted to continue with their examinations. A "3", which is the average mark, is insufficient.

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**E. Conscription**

6. Latvian conscripts are since 1956 obliged to do their military service, not in Latvia, but in KAZAKHSTAN, Central Asia, VLADIVOSTOK or the extreme North. Officially they serve three years but they often do not return home until anything from 2 to 7 months after their time is up.

**F. Economic situation**

7. No economic improvement took place in 1956 with the exception of sausages which can now be bought unrestricted. In MOSCOW the food and consumer goods situation is much better than in Latvia. The standard of living in Greater Russia is improving while in Latvia it is deteriorating. Latvia is very short of food, particularly eggs, butter, sugar, flour and meat. Bread is however sufficient.

8. Some prices are as follows:

Kilo butter:	27 roubles (Black market 40)
Sausage horse	18 roubles
meat:	
Shoes of poor quality (which last 3 or 4 months):	75 roubles
Woollen suit for men:	1,000 - 1,200 roubles

9. The average salary of a white collar worker is 500 roubles per month, for a worker 800 to 1,000 roubles, a metal "Shock-worker" up to 2,000 roubles. There were no salary increases in 1956. Only the pensions for old people were increased in October. The smallest pension is now 300 roubles.

**G. Collectivisation**

10. Collectivisation has now been completed in Latvia. There have been no signs of permitting collective farmers to dissolve the kolkhozy and return to private property, as is the case in Poland. The working and salary conditions on the sovkhosy are better than on the kolkhozy. Sovkhoz peasants are for one thing paid monthly whereas kolkhoz peasants only get paid at the end of the year.

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11. Schoolchildren and students are obliged to work every autumn (September and October) in the country. In 1956 they were even sent for one month to work in the virgin lands in KAZAKHSTAN. Young factory workers do 10 days' work on kolkhozy which are short of labour.

H. Virgin lands campaign

12. Despite the propaganda carried on in the universities for volunteers for settlement in the virgin lands, no Latvian students applied. On the other hand Russians were forced by the Komsomol by threats that they would be thrown out of the Komsomol if they refused.

13. Factories and enterprises were obliged to send a certain percentage of less good workers to the new Asiatic territories. Paradoxically, most of these unfortunates were Russians. The first transport left at the end of 1955 and comprised 800 young people.

I. Freedom of travel

14. Latvians can now move freely through the Soviet Union except to closed military zones for which special permission is needed. In Latvia there are two closed zones: LIBAU (naval base) and DUNDAGA (according to rumours, a guided missiles base).

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A. Return of post-war deportees

16. The first of the Latvians to be deported after the war started returning towards the end of 1955.

L. Religious worship

17. Among the repatriated deportees were a number of Protestant pastors. Divine services are now permitted and churches are crowded on Sundays but only by the adult and aged. The younger people ...

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people only go to the big Easter and Christmas Masses. Most young Latvians however go to Church secretly to be confirmed, usually in the country. The pastor makes no public announcement but notes it in his private notebook. Practically everybody has a church wedding and everybody, with a very few exceptions (including Party members), takes their children to be baptized. In the case of Party members, however, church weddings and baptisms take place in private homes.

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